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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2002

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March 30, 1994

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MAY 19 1994

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

The Honorable James H. Quello
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Quello:

I recently learned that the Federal Communications Commission is planning to charge the recreational boating public an annual user fee for the use of a VHF radio.

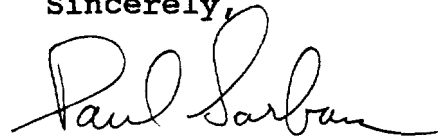
As I understand the new policy, boaters would be required to purchase a mandatory 10 year license. This would add an initial outlay of \$70 to the current application processing fee of \$35 to \$40. While a \$7 annual user fee is not unreasonable, a lump sum increase of this kind could force boaters to stop their practice of carrying VHF marine radios aboard their boats. As you know, a marine radio is a vital piece of safety equipment. Every boat should be equipped with a VHF radio in case of any emergency breakdowns or life threatening situations.

Enclosed is a letter I recently received from the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association, Inc., regarding this matter. I would greatly appreciate it if you would carefully review their comments as you consider this matter.

Your attention to this issue is greatly appreciated.

With best regards,

Sincerely,



Paul S. Sarbanes
United States Senator

PSS/lss/jac

Enclosure

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MARYLAND SALTWATER SPORTFISHERMEN'S ASSOCIATION, INC.

7626 Baltimore & Annapolis Blvd. Glen Burnie, MD 21060-3530

94-19

February 22, 1994

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MAY 19 1994

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Mr. William Caton
Secretary of FCC
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Caton,

I write to you on behalf of the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association (MSSA) which is the largest sport fishing organization in Maryland. We have a membership role of over 7,000 conservation-minded members. The MSSA has been made aware of a proposed increase of fees associated with the VHF marine radio.

We strongly urge you to have the proposed cost of a 10 year license remain free of charge to recreational boaters. It is our understanding that a cost of \$70 would be included in obtaining or renewing your ship station license. In addition, a \$35 or \$40 processing fee would be added on the \$70 license fee. Many boaters just cannot afford this additional \$110.00 fee to own and operate a VHF radio. Seven dollars a year is not an unreasonable amount for recreational boaters to have the benefit of a VHF marine radio. The problem is the initial output of over \$100.00 to obtain your ship station license.

The MSSA is very concerned about recreational boaters not installing a VHF radio on board their boats due to this large increase of licensing fees. Safety should be the first order of business while on the water. Not only should you have the proper safety equipment, such as PFD's, horns or whistles, and navigational lights, but a signaling device such as a marine radio that could be used in emergency situations. We are now talking about a life threatening situation that could end in a loss of life because the vessel owner could not afford the cost of a ship station license fee.

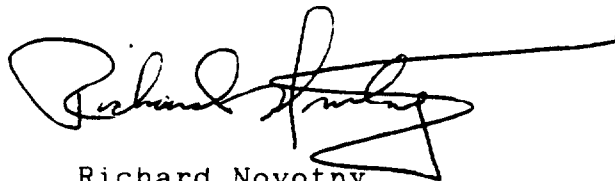
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Owning and maintaining a boat is a very costly proposition. In general, most recreational boat captains have the required safety equipment or more on board their boats. In fact, more often than not, most boaters are safety conscience and carry additional safety equipment such as a VHF radio. Without a marine radio to contact the Coast Guard or a vessel in their immediate area they are putting their life and their guests lives in a life threatening situation. Accidents do happen daily throughout the U.S. on its many waterways. We feel that a VHF marine radio is a vital piece of equipment for the safety of our recreational boaters.

Boat captains monitor channel 16 for any distress calls in their immediate area in order to render assistance. Using your VHF to listen to the marine weather is very important while on the water for updating hazardous weather conditions approaching your area.

Do not force the recreation boater to abandon this very important piece of safety equipment on board their boat. We ask that you would reconsider the \$70.00 10 year user fee that is before you. We ask that a special exception be granted in the name of safety and give the ship station license free of charge to the recreational boater. We are not asking to remove the processing fee to process each application, but only to give some relief, and quite possibly saving of lives, by issuing a free VHF marine radio license.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Novotny", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard Novotny
Executive Director